



## The E-Newsletter of the Senate Majority Caucus

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Majority Caucus Website: [www.capitol.hawaii.gov/senmaj/](http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/senmaj/)

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# Budget, Ice, Education, and Rx Pass Final Reading

On April 15, with three weeks remaining before the Legislature's scheduled May 6 adjournment date, the Senate passed the budget, the education and ice omnibus bills, and Hawaii Rx Plus. The unprecedented early passage of these key measures gives the Governor ten days to accept or veto the measures, and gives lawmakers time to override a veto before the end of the session.

### Budget: Hundreds of Decisions

Senate Ways and Means Chair Sen. Brian Taniguchi (D-10<sup>th</sup>, Manoa, McCully) said HB1800, the budget bill, reflected "hundreds of crucial decisions" about what was best for the state. He said, "This budget, in conjunction with our six-year general fund financial plan, demonstrates one fact: this Legislature has prioritized the use of our precious resources and has seen fit to provide those in areas that are most important to our state's well-being now *and* in the future." The bill passed by a 23-2 vote.

### Education Reinvention

SB3238 is the Education Reinvention Act of 2004, a package of solutions culled from months of testimony, debate, and fact-finding. Senate Education Committee Vice-Chair Sen. Gary L. Hooser (D-7<sup>th</sup>, Kaua'i, Ni'ihau) said it "changes fundamentally and positively the way our schools are managed." The bill passed by a 22-3 vote.

### Task Force Findings

The findings of this past summer's



*April 15 was a historic day on the Senate floor, as the budget, the education omnibus bill, the ice bill, and Hawaii Rx Plus all passed final reading in a single session.*

Ice Task Force are reflected in HB 2003 and 2004, measures that combine additional treatment for first-time offenders with stricter penalties for dealers. Task Force Co-Chair Sen. Melodie Aduja (D-23<sup>rd</sup>, Kaneohe, Kahuku) said, "Ice is an epidemic in our state that affects people in every walk of life, with a terrible impact on families and or state's crime rate."

### A Landmark Measure

With the passage of Hawaii Rx, Hawaii joins Maine as one of two states on the nation with prescription drug relief on the books. The bill addresses a gap group of people without drug coverage estimated as high as 300,000. Health Committee Chair Sen. Roz Baker said the bill, SB 3237, is "a very forward thinking bill – a forward-looking bill." Hawaii Rx Plus passed final reading in the Senate by a 24-1 margin. The full text of these and other bills form the 2004 Legislative Session can be read on the Legislature's website at [www.capitol.hawaii.gov](http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov).

## Capital Improvements Slated for Hospitals, Schools

Of the more than 200 capital improvement projects approved for 2004-05, roughly 40 percent are directed at public education facilities and hospitals. The following is a sample of projects that the budget has funded for the coming year:

### Kauai

One Stop Center Building, Kauai Community College, \$10 million

### Oahu

New School, Ocean Pointe Elementary, \$12 million

Nanakuli High School classrooms, \$5.75 million

### Molokai

Renovations and Campus Redevelopment, Molokai General Hospital, \$320,000

### Lanai

Electrical Upgrade, Lanai High and Elementary School, \$300,000

### Maui

Kulumalu Long-Term Care Facility Construction, \$16.25 million

### Hawaii

New Pharmacy Building, UH Hilo, \$18.4 million

## Community Action Group Hails Lawmakers for Passage of Hawaii Rx Plus Bill



Senator Ron Menor speaks to FACE members as (from left to right) Rep. Dennis Arakaki and FACE President Rev. Alan Mark look on.

In an outpouring of community support for the new Hawaii Rx Plus bill, which has passed final reading on both houses of the Legislature and has been forwarded to the Governor for her signature, Faith Action for Community Equity (FACE) held a news conference in the state

Capitol on April 20 to salute the lawmakers who made the bill possible. FACE Public Health Committee Chair George Honjiyo said, "We applaud the members of the Legislature for taking action in making a difference in providing discounted prescription medicine for those who have no coverage or limited coverage. We urge the Governor to sign this bill and give the neediest of our people relief."



### Key Lawmakers Cited

Members of FACE honored Senators Ron Menor, Rosalyn Baker, and Suzanne Chun Oakland, along with Representatives Roy Takumi and Dennis Arakaki for championing Hawaii Rx Plus.

Senator Menor, Chair of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Housing, said, "Today we are able to come together to celebrate a victory. This is a bill whose time has clearly come, and it will position Hawaii once again as a national leader in health care. We must remember, however, that our work is not yet done. Efforts are underway to include Hawaii in a multi-state purchasing pool, and Hawaii Rx participants should be part of that pool."



FACE is an inter-faith organization with an estimated 40,000 members on Oahu and Maui.

### Media Watch

## Editorial Applauds Fast Tracking of Key Bills

An April 18 editorial in the Honolulu Advertiser contrasts the early passage of key bills this session (as described on page one) with the legislative "brinkmanship" of earlier years, when the budget and other major bills were not agreed upon until the session's final days.

### "Brinkmanship"

Editorial page editor Jerry Burris says that in the past "the practice of brinkmanship became so entrenched that legislators frequently had to extend their session when they ran out of time. Last-minute furries and extensions became the norm, rather than the exception." Burris notes that this year's approach will give the Governor time to review the bills and

decide whether or not to veto them during the ten-day period provided by the Constitution. Bills vetoed by the Governor could be kept alive by a veto override vote before the end of the session.

### "A Pattern Has Been Set"

"Among the measures signed, sealed and delivered to Gov. Linda Lingle are a massive education package, a war-on-ice package, and the entire supplemental state budget," he writes. "A pattern has been set. In the future, lawmakers should make it a habit to finish their big work early. Not as a strategic matter, but as a simple matter of sober, sensible lawmaking."



### Appeals Court Nominee Confirmed

Sen. Melodie Aduja (D, Kaneohe, Kahuku) poses with newly confirmed Judge Alexa D. M. Fujise. On April 16, the Senate confirmed Fujise to the Intermediate Court of Appeals, where she will become the sixth associate judge in the court. She currently serves as the director of the Research and Reference Support Division for the City and County of Honolulu's Department of the Prosecuting Attorney, where she has served since 1984. Judge Fujise was confirmed by a unanimous vote.